

## Cordt Kassner

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**May 14th, 2024**

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## Headlines

### **NHPCO and HAN secure significant policy victories in Congress**

*NHPCO; Press Release; 5/10/24*

This week marked a series of triumphs for the National Hospice and Palliative Care Organization (NHPCO) and its advocacy arm, the Hospice Action Network (HAN), in collaboration with the National Association for Home Care & Hospice (NAHC). Notably, the trade associations spearheaded discussions with the House of Representatives' Ways and Means Committee, resulting in crucial advancements in telehealth flexibility for hospice care. The passage of the "Preserving Telehealth, Hospital, and Ambulance Access Act" through committee signifies a pivotal moment for the future of hospice care. ...

HAN's meticulous engagement with the Ways & Means Committee staff also successfully thwarted potential cuts, safeguarding the capacity of hospices to provide essential care to vulnerable populations. "With an aging population and escalating demand for end-of-life care, particularly in underserved regions, protecting hospice funding is imperative to guarantee compassionate and

dignified care for all individuals in their final days,” said NHPCO COO and Interim CEO, Ben Marcantonio.

*Notable Mentions: Logan Hoover, NHPCO VP of Policy and Government Relations; Dr. Joseph Shega, Vitas' Chief Medical Officer*

### **New DOJ task force to tackle competition-related concerns in healthcare**

*McKnights Senior Living; by Kathleen Steele Gaivin; 5/13/24*

The Justice Department said its Antitrust Division’s new Task Force on Health Care Monopolies and Collusion will consider “widespread competition concerns shared by patients, healthcare professionals, businesses and entrepreneurs, including issues regarding payer-provider consolidation, serial acquisitions, labor and quality of care, medical billing, healthcare IT services, access to and misuse of healthcare data and more.” The group’s mandate is to facilitate policy advocacy, investigations and, where warranted, civil and criminal enforcement in healthcare markets.

## **Hospice Provider News**

### **Vitas Healthcare names four leaders to its executive team: Melad, Escueta, Dr. Loftis, Durkin**

*InvestorsObserver; 5/13/24*

Vitas Healthcare proudly announces the addition of four new leaders to its executive management team, including the promotions of Jennifer Melad, Martin Escueta and Lauren Loftis, MD. The hospice company also welcomes Vicky Durkin as its latest newly hired executive.

- Jennifer Melad, VP of Hospice Operations ...
- Martin Escueta, VP of Hospice Operations ...
- Lauren Loftis, MD, Regional Medical Director ...
- Vicky Durkin, VP of Employer Communications and Branding ...



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## **Hospice pivotal to Enhabit's growth strategy as a standalone company**

*Hospice News; by Holly Vossel; 5/9/24*

Hospice will remain a core piece of Enhabit Inc.'s (NYSE: EHAB) strategic growth plans following its recent announcements to remain a standalone business. The company was mum about its strategic decision not to sell in Thursday's earnings call, but executives elaborated on its home health and hospice focal points.

## **Investing in employee engagement can add a competitive advantage**

*HomeCare; by Jeffrey Knapp; 5/9/24*

You cannot pay people enough to care. But it is possible to attract and retain great talent and bring out the best in them by fully engaging employees in a shared purpose, giving them a sense that their work is worthwhile and that they are making a difference in the world. That is the culture effect on health care staffing. ... For leaders who want either to start building or to invest more in a culture infrastructure, do not forget these essential steps:

1. Identify and clearly communicate your organization's values and teach managers how to put them into action. ...
2. Intentionally plan the key activities that make up your culture cycle, then build and refine the infrastructure and cadence. ...
3. Measure and refine cultural engagement with the best tools for your organization. This will include the most relevant and effective employee experience survey and management tools.

## **Ribbon cutting: Hospice of North Alabama**

*Jackson County Sentinel; 5/11/24*

Hospice of North Alabama held their ribbon cutting at their new location at 510 East Laurel Street in Scottsboro on Tuesday, April 30. ... "We're glad to open our doors to the Scottsboro community," said Hayley Lamberth, with Hospice of North Alabama. "We understand that end of life care is physically and emotionally difficult for patients and their families. That's why our experienced staff is available day and night to provide the highest quality, compassionate and individualized care for your loved ones."



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**Accelerate Innovation**

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## Palliative Care Provider News

### **Design and death: palliative care needs more creativity**

*AAP - Australian Associated Press; by Cassandra Morgan; 5/10/24*

At the Caritas Christi palliative care unit, "homeliness" is sprawling crayon lines and scribbled messages of "get well soon", drawn by children in its arts room. It's the sense of quiet, the soft carpet underfoot, and the ability for patients to simply open a window, or walk outside their rooms and touch a tree or feel the soil. Architectural expert Rebecca McLaughlan says homeliness is more about what a space allows people to do than how it looks. ... "In subtle ways, these facilities do affect the quality of time and the quantity of time that people spend with their loved ones." ... The researcher is among experts advocating for greater design innovation in the palliative care sector - a concept often dismissed as incongruous with the reality of evolving health and safety regulations.

## Clinical News

### **A narrative review of risk mitigation strategies in the management of opioids for chronic pain and palliative care in older adults: Interprofessional collaboration with the pharmacist**

*Annals of Palliative Medicine; by Insaf Mohammad, Candice L Garwood, Lisa Binns-Emerick*

**Key content and findings:** A variety of risk mitigation strategies to improve safety for older adults using opioids exist. They include risk assessment, tapering opioids, reducing high-risk concomitant medications, utilizing non-opioid therapies, screening for and treatment of opioid use disorder (OUD), toxicology testing, co-prescribing naloxone, utilizing controlled substance agreements, reviewing prescription drug monitoring program data, prescriber and patient education, and collaboration with pharmacists and palliative care specialists.

## **A Philadelphia pharmacy's closure after 26 years highlights the industry's growing challenges**

*Times Daily; by Lizzy McClellan Ravitch, The Philadelphia Inquirer; 5/11/24*

Last Monday, Friendly Pharmacy filled 318 prescriptions. For about 100 of them, insurance companies paid the pharmacy less than \$3. In 22 instances that day, the reimbursement was less than the cost of the medication. ... [Managing pharmacist Brad] Tabaac plans to close his doors on May 31 after 26 years in business. ... Independent pharmacies like Friendly, as well as some chains, have been pinched by pricing and fees set by pharmacy benefit managers — the companies that handle prescription drug plans for health insurance. The three biggest pharmacy benefit managers are CVS Health, Optum Rx and Express Scripts. They control nearly 90% of the market, according to the National Community Pharmacists Association (NCPA), and some of their parent companies also own pharmacies.



## **HopeWest selected as Childhood Bereavement Changemaker**

*High Country Spotlight; Press Release; 5/9/24*

In partnership with Colorado-based Judi's House/JAG Institute HopeWest is one of 11 grief-centered organizations selected by Judi's House/JAG Institute to participate in the 2024 Childhood Bereavement Changemaker program to build capacity for data collection and program evaluation through a series of trainings, workshops, and collaborative learning sessions. Over the course of a year, Changemakers will receive guidance and practical recommendations to address data and evaluation needs that can inform strategic planning, support funding opportunities, and enhance the overall impact organizations like HopeWest have on the 96,000 Colorado children estimated to experience the death of a parent or sibling by age 18.

## **Regulatory News**

### **Treasury extends Medicare insolvency date, citing savings from home health**

*McKnights Home Care; by Adam Healy; 5/13/24*

Medicare insolvency received a five-year extension — and part of the reprieve can be attributed to the cost of home health. Myriad factors, including job growth and low unemployment rate, contributed to the extension. The projections were also partly influenced by home health spending which has been “significantly lower than estimated prior to the pandemic,” according to the Social Security and Medicare Trustees report. “As a result of the recent home health staffing shortages, the trustees continue to consider the spending level for this service to be suppressed,” they said in the report. “Thus, they have increased their home health spending growth factor by 2.9 percentage points in each of the next 3 years.”

## Mergers & Acquisition News

### **Around the nation: Steward Health Care puts hospitals up for sale following bankruptcy**

*Advisory Board; 5/10/24*

Steward Health Care, which [filed](#) for chapter 11 bankruptcy on Monday, has placed all its 31 hospitals in the United States up for sale in hopes of finalizing transactions by the end of the summer to address its \$9 billion debt, in today's bite-sized hospital and health industry news from Georgia, Illinois, and Texas.



## Post-Acute Care News

### **Why Walmart's exit from healthcare is a wake-up call to providers**

*Modern Healthcare; by Marty Bonick; 5/10/24*

Marty Bonick is president and CEO of Nashville, Tennessee-based Ardent Health. Try healthcare, they said. It will be easy. There's so much to improve, they said.

We can do it better. While "they" — the retailers and disruptors once keen to transform healthcare — weren't completely wrong, there's no doubt this thinking has shifted in recent months. ... Walmart's decision to shutter its health clinics and virtual care services is the latest high-profile exit in the retail health sector. Already this year, Walgreens has announced plans to close 160 VillageMD clinics while Amazon cut jobs within its One Medical unit and Optum is closing its telehealth business.

### **Highmark Health lays off dozens of employees**

*Modern Healthcare; by Lauren Berryman; 5/8/24*

Highmark Health has laid off 47 employees in its latest round of job cuts. The Pittsburgh-headquartered organization owns Highmark Inc., which provides health insurance plans to 6.9 million policyholders in Pennsylvania, West Virginia, Delaware and New York. It also operates Allegheny Health Network, which comprises 14 hospitals. A Highmark spokesperson declined to answer questions about the types of roles or specific locations affected. ... The most recent layoffs, which were first reported by news outlet PennLive Tuesday, follow the 182 jobs Highmark eliminated in March. The organization has laid off at least 229 employees so far in 2024.

### **Life Coordinated Commonwealth PACE holds ribbon cutting**

*Marshall County Daily; by Staff Report; 5/10/24*

Life Coordinated Commonwealth PACE held a Ribbon Cutting on Friday morning with special guest Governor Andy Beshear in attendance to launch the Program of All-Inclusive Care for the elderly in Western Kentucky. ... Life Coordinated Commonwealth PACE will serve qualifying PACE members in a six-county area in Western Kentucky that includes Marshall, Calloway, Graves, Hickman, Fulton and McCracken.



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## Technology / Innovations News

### **Best Buy lands new health system partner**

*Becker's Health IT; by Giles Bruce; 5/10/24*

The tech retailer said it joined forces with Bethlehem, Pa.-based St. Luke's University Health Network in the first quarter. The health system will use Best Buy's Current Health remote monitoring platform to treat post-discharge congestive heart failure patients. "We talk a lot about our big goal to enable care at home for everyone, and we're intentional about our role as the enabler," Best Buy Health said in a May 9 statement. "Partnering with providers, health plans and biopharma organizations is at the core of our strategy." Best Buy has been leaning into healthcare in recent years, acquiring Current Health in 2021 for \$400 million and sending Geek Squad members into patients' homes to set up hospital-at-home technology.

### **Top 5 AI concerns for nurses**

*Becker's Health IT; by Giles Bruce; 5/8/24*

Nurses have been expressing concern about healthcare artificial intelligence lately, with some even marching in protest against the technology. But what are their main qualms with AI? [According to a recent study:]

1. Lack of empathy and patient connection
2. Job replacement
3. Data security
4. Regulation of emerging technologies
5. Upskilling, learning new technology

## General News

### **The state of paid sick leave: 6 notes**

*Becker's Hospital Review; by Kelly Gooch; 5/9/24*

Paid sick leave has expanded across the U.S. as more states pass laws related to the issue. Here are six notes about the efforts: ... [Click on the title's link for details.]

## Recognizing and Responding to Mental Health Issues in Palliative Care

With Nathan Fairman, MD, MPH

Wednesday, May 15, 2024 | Noon-1:00 (PDT)

1.0 CE available for nurses, social workers, and MFTs

*Interesting education opportunity*

### Two documentaries could bring attention, not all of it wanted

*McKnights Senior Living - Editors' Columns; by Lois A. Bowers; 5/13/24*

The past couple of weeks have brought news of two upcoming documentaries that promise to shine a spotlight on senior living, warts and all. One, "Caregiving," will focus on professional and family caregivers "as the United States' long-term care system threatens to tip into crisis," according to public media station [WETA](#). The two-hour film will debut on PBS in spring 2025. No doubt the project will draw attention because one of the executive producers is Bradley Cooper, who was a caregiver to his late father when he had lung cancer. "That was a wake-up call for me, ..." he said ...

Another project premieres sooner — [today 5/14] — on Paramount+. Whereas "Caregiving" includes someone famous, "Pillowcase Murders" centers on someone infamous, at least to the readers of *McKnight's Senior Living*.

### Obie the therapy dog promoted to chief morale officer at North Devon Hospice

*DevonLive; by Lewis Clarke; 5/10/24*

A therapy dog has received his first official promotion after bringing comfort and smiles to patients, families, and staff at North Devon Hospice. Last month, pet therapy dog Obie was awarded the title of chief morale officer in recognition of his work helping patients and loved ones staying on the hospice's bedded unit to enjoy cuddles and companionship. As well as being popular with those receiving care, Obie is also a welcome visitor for staff at the hospice.

## International News

## **African Palliative Care Association: Annual Report 2022-2023**

*African Palliative Care Association; 5/10/24*

View and download the APCA Atlas of Palliative Care in Africa. It includes the following 8 "Impact Areas":

1. Palliative care service delivery
2. Health workforce
3. Health information systems
4. Access to essential controlled medicine and technologies
5. Palliative care financing
6. Research, innovation, and development
7. Communications
8. Leadership and governance

## **Other News**

### **A thoughtful exit from the C-suite**

*Becker's Hospital Review; by Kelly Gooch; 5/8/24*

Stepping away from the C-suite takes many forms, and hospital and health system executives leave for a variety of reasons, including to retire or to take on new challenges. However, each individual must consider that transition from a business, emotional and personal perspective. For Peter Fine, who has served as Phoenix-based Banner Health's CEO for 24 years, those considerations were part of his thought process. He announced his retirement in April. However, he began to think about his transition out of the C-suite three years ago. ...

## **Today's Encouragement**

**The best time to plant a tree was 20 years ago. The second best time is now.  
- Chinese proverb**

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